

MAYOR'S COLUMN - Week of June 25, 2007

This past week I attended the County Executive's Summit on flooding with Village Administrator, Harry Porr, Superintendent of Public Works, Rocco Circosta, and representatives from the Bronxville School.

The purpose of the all day meeting was to bring officials together to create momentum for flooding remediation solutions. Efforts to deal with the problem in the County actually go back to the 1880's. Many have documented the problem, but historically, solutions were historically not implemented. In the last quarter century, flooding problems have increased dramatically. Almost 60% of the County wetlands which serve as water retention basins have been lost due to development. Climate data also shows a great intensity and frequency of rare storms in the County during the same period. The bottom line is we have been receiving more rain while rapidly decreasing places to put it.

To stem this problem, County Executive Andrew Spano announced a proposal to have a capital fund of at least \$10 million for each of the next five years for flood mitigation. Projects could include property acquisition, design and development of retention basins and construction of flood control devices.

The criteria for County funding will be developed by a newly appointed Flood Action Plan Task Force, a group of professionals with expertise in land management and flood control.

The goal of the Committee is to work with local municipalities, the State and the Federal government on joint projects designed to reduce flood damage.

Other initiatives resulting from the Flood Summit include:

- An upgrade in the maintenance, inspection and mapping of the County storm water systems.
- Formation of local water shed groups to get a local perspective on flooding issues in each affected municipality.
- Implementation of site visits by the Army Corps of Engineers to review and update their previous work in the area.
- Coordination with FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) to seek additional remediation funding for the County.
- Creation of a template of model ordinances and standards for storm water management by the County Planning Department.

On the Village level, together with the school, we have commissioned the service of J. Robert Folchetti and Associates, CCC, a civil and environmental engineering company. We are awaiting review of past studies and recommendations on short and long term solutions to mitigate the flooding impact on the Village while we participate in the more global remediation efforts.

In light of the two recent rain events, many residents have requested information about flood insurance since most homeowner policies are exempt from coverage. The Village is one of 20,000 communities nationwide that joined the FEMA administered National Flood Insurance Program. Insurance is available not only in high risk areas but low to moderate risk where 30% of all claims actually occur. The National Flood Insurance Program underwrites the policy which is issued through more than 100 private insurance companies through local agents. Insurance is available to anyone, even if the property has a history of flood damage.

Policies include both contents and building coverage - \$100,000 for contents for renters as well as homeowners and \$250,000 for residential buildings. There is \$500,000 maximum coverage for commercial buildings and contents.

Generally not covered are vehicles, fences, landscaping and swimming pools. Check for limitations on basements in some policies.

For more information, check [FloodSmart.gov/findanagent](https://www.floodsmart.gov/findanagent).

The recent flood events have captured the attention of elected leaders, environmental professionals and policy makers from White Plains to Washington, DC. We must keep this issue fresh in their minds and make sure that this time positive action will quickly follow competent studies and best intentions.